

## Wandering Into Readiness

Many readers know of the trail I walk almost daily as part of my physical therapy. It is part of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Park. It's a place of unique geological and ecosystem diversity. The path I take is called the Good Harbor Trail. The loop is two point seven miles. I used to do the whole loop. Now I just walk under a mile 'in' and then back. Usually takes about fifty minutes.

The number of thoughts filtering into my brain every sojourn are as countless as the number of stars. Most missives or stories have their roots in this expedition through these sacred woods. I know all forests are sacred. They are the last vestiges of places untamed by human hand, left to be as their Creator intended. The wildlife and fauna deeply appreciate this.

I've seen deer, many of them. I've seen majestic bucks, one who stood in front of me for what seemed like minutes, then sauntered off to my right, stopped parallel to where I was headed and stared some more. He was unique not because of his ten 'points', his antlers, but because it appeared he had a rather wide black collar, surrounding his neck and dipping down his chest like an upside down tear drop. In the center of this collar, from his chin, down his chest until it disappeared between his front legs, was a breastplate of the purest white. His coat was more gray than brown.

I do not know what he really was; his species whitetail but never did I see one like him.

I've seen bobcats, untold number of birds, of course the ubiquitous squirrels some grey, some black, some hybrids. I know the black ones were imported from Germany in the early nineteen hundred by someone famous in Battle Creek, a city two hundred and fifty miles south. They quickly dominated that area but as they spread north the grays seemed to stave off complete annihilation to maintain about fifty percent of the population. Of course the chipmunks scamper everywhere until they go to sleep for winter.

One time, for about ten seconds, I saw the incredibly elusive cougar, not thirty feet from where I stood. It was in the middle of the path as I chanced a look up.

Because the footpath meanders through a swamp, part of the Shelda Creek drainage into the great freshwater sea, Lake Michigan a mere hundred yards away, there are (or were) frogs galore. I say were, because suddenly this fall (a record warm one) they disappeared almost overnight way ahead of schedule.

I hope they are back in the spring.

Today's journey was quiet. The only reason I knew I was not the first species, only the first human, were the many deer tracks crisscrossing the path and the prints of a lone coyote, who followed the trail for some time before meandering off deeper into the vast hemlock forest that surrounds many of the wetlands. I am sure it was a coyote. I googled his print. His tracks were in a straight line versus a dog's which are offset.

Today's prayers wandered much like the trail. I remembered the words of our deacon who's sermon a couple of weeks back spoke of 'getting ready' as a description for the season of Advent versus what often is called a period of waiting for the One to come. I much prefer the 'getting ready' aspect. It's why I wander the trail daily, praying my way through.

I want the temple, my body, of my soul my true life's essence, to be ready as my soul, for Him.